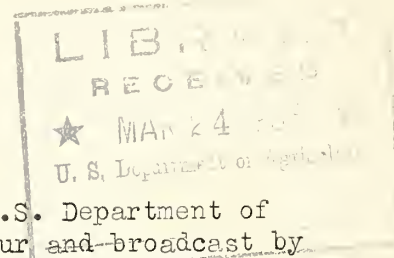


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Home Demonstration Work in Alaska



A radio talk by Miss Madge J. Reese, Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, delivered in the Home Demonstration Radio Hour and broadcast by a network of 49 associate NBC radio stations, March 6, 1935.

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Just yesterday I received a letter from Mrs. Lydia Fohn-Hansen, the Home Demonstration Leader of Alaska, saying she was very busy making plans for the canning demonstrations to be given this coming summer, and preparing circulars on food preservation. Yes, Alaska has a canning season, and a garden season too. In addition to canning a variety of vegetables and native berries for use during the long winter months, Alaska homemakers find it convenient to put canned salmon, moose, caribou, and venison in the cache. I suppose you want to know what a cache is? A cache is a small log cabin on high stilts in which the early settlers and trappers stored their meat to protect it from the wild animals. Nowadays any kind of storage space for food, in or out of the home, is commonly called a cache in Alaska. The Extension Service introduced home canning in tin and now the local stores have stocked the necessary equipment to meet the demands of the homemakers.

As most women in Alaska do all their own housework, the management of time and energy is important. Eleven of the twenty organized groups conducting home demonstration programs are studying a management project called "Taking the Work Out of Housework." Putting brains as well as brawn into housework makes life a lot more interesting for women. The groups learn how to arrange the kitchen equipment and utensils to save time and energy. They first study good kitchen plans. Then they consider all household duties in the analysis of time and energy expended in the day's work. Women want to know about the best laundry methods to use under different home conditions; also about the care of wollen clothing and household articles. To be a rested, happy housekeeper one must learn correct posture and the proper care of the feet. Home demonstration groups in Alaska are studying and discussing all these important phases of home management.

Some Alaska women find both rest and profit in spending spare time on handicraft arts. Women and 4-H club girls are making very useful and good-looking handmade gloves of native-tanned caribou and reindeer hides. They carry on weaving as a home industry for both pleasure and profit. Both the whites and natives weave scarfs and rugs. By native, we mean the Indian and Eskimo population. Original designs featuring native motifs are worked out for the hooked rugs and wall hangings. I recall that at one of the home demonstration meetings I attended when in Alaska, the women voted to buy cooperatively a small table loom. They wanted to weave the winter supply of scarfs for their families. Many women in Alaska carry around knitting-bags and when visiting with friends and neighbors make the needles fly. Warm woolen knitted wear comes in handy for school children and for all out-of-door use during the cold winters. In 1934 the extension office had twelve hundred requests for the directions for knitting the spiral sock which is now popular in Alaska.

Although ready-made clothing can be purchased throughout Alaska, many women and girls want to know how to cut and fit patterns, to make dress forms, (over)

to learn the best processes in construction and remodeling, and good designs in children's clothing. The native girls especially like to sew and their work in the 4-H clothing clubs is most creditable.

The Home Demonstration Leader is organizing other phases of work, but from what I have told you, you can see that the home demonstration program of Alaska differs little from that of any State. The Extension Service was organized four years ago, at the Alaska Agricultural College located at Fairbanks. Already Alaskan people have come to recognize the service as a very valuable asset to the Territory.

Last fall I spent two months in Alaska and visited twelve communities in different sections of Interior and Southeastern Alaska. I found the farm and village women progressive and eager for new ideas. The great distance between communities, with less travel and communication, enhances the high appreciation of home demonstration work. Twelve hundred women receive regularly the home demonstration news letters and 10,334 home economics bulletins were distributed in 1934. What a fine thing it is for our Far-North Territory to have its Agricultural College made a usable source of information through Extension Service publications!

Alaska has three radio stations over which extension workers broadcast. I had the interesting experience of talking over the Farthest-North radio station in the world at Anchorage. Alaska, our last frontier, is a frontier with modern conveniences and advantages and I believe the time will come when Alaska will be the home of many more prosperous and happy farm families.

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